



**MINUTES  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
February 4, 2020**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.

**Present:** Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Deirdre Kvale, Michelle Jerde, Jahn Dyvik, and Tom Skjaret

**Staff Present:** City Administrator: Scott Weske; Public Works Director: Sean Diercks; Fire Chief: James Van Eyll; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

**Absent:** None

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**MAYOR'S COMMENTS - LONG LAKE NEWS, MEETING REVIEW AND UPDATES**

Mayor Miner offered the following comments and updates:

Mayor Miner congratulated the Orono Lions Club on their successful 33<sup>rd</sup> Orono Lions Snowball Open held recently on January 25. He added that it was great to see a lot of folks who are regulars to the event from both within and outside the community.

He also noted that he hoped people were having a chance to enjoy ice skating and other winter activities.

**APPROVE AGENDA**

*A motion was made by Skjaret, seconded by Jerde, to approve the Agenda as presented. Ayes: all.*

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The Consent Agenda consisted of:

- A. Approve Minutes of January 21, 2019 City Council Meeting
- B. Receive Unofficial Draft Minutes of January 16, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting
- C. Approve Vendor Claims and Payroll
- D. Appointment of Park Board Chair and Secretary

*A motion was made by Jerde, seconded by Skjaret, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ayes: all.*

**OPEN CORRESPONDENCE**

**Fire Department Boot Hockey Tournament** – Fire Chief Van Eyll reported that on the previous Friday night, the Long Lake Fire Department hosted six other fire departments for a boot hockey tournament at Holbrook Park. Nothing but positive comments were received about the park and ice conditions, and he thanked Public Works for doing extra shoveling in preparation for the event. Since the LLFD won the tournament, they will be hosting next year.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **Annual Performance Evaluation for Public Works Director and Resolution Approving a Salary Step Increase**

Weske reported that all City employees serve a six-month probationary period when hired, and upon completion of this probationary period, employee performance is evaluated by the City Administrator annually.

Mr. Diercks was appointed to the position of Public Works Director effective February 2, 2018. Weske indicated he continues to be pleased with Mr. Diercks' performance and would recommend the City Council find he has earned a satisfactory evaluation. Staff also recommends Diercks receive a one-step salary increase from Step 6 to Step 7 effective February 3, 2020.

Mayor Miner called attention to a typographical error in the resolution prepared for signature. City Clerk Moeller indicated she would make the correction and reprint the resolution promptly once the meeting was adjourned.

*A motion was made by Skjaret, seconded by Dyvik, to adopt Resolution No. 2020-05 approving a salary step increase changing Public Works Director Sean Diercks' salary from Step 6 to Step 7 of the 2020 Salary Pay Plan due to having a satisfactory performance review. Ayes: all.*

Diercks shared that he really, really enjoys working for the City of Long Lake.

Mayor Miner recognized Diercks for his efforts.

### **Begin Discussion of Employee Handbook Update, Employee Compensation, and Employee Benefits**

Weske recalled that previously, the City Council had established a goal to update the City's Employee Handbook to be reflective of Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) changes, social media/internet usage policies, and other appropriate content revisions. Staff has been requesting and receiving handbooks from surrounding communities to help assist with updates and policy review. He noted that a copy of the current handbook had been included with Council member meeting packets, and advised that the Employee Handbook was last amended in 1999.

During the 2020 final levy budget presentation in December 2019, the Council asked how employee wage increases were determined and why employees do not have high deductible insurance plans. Since most of the City's employees have been employed for many years, they are stepped out and are at the top of their salary range at Step 8; therefore, the practice has been for the Council to approve a percent increase that applies for the step range for all employees and functions as a cost of living adjustment for those employees who have been at the top of their salary range and ineligible for any other wage adjustment. The insurance policies offered by the City have always been lower deductible plans, as that has been considered to be a part of the compensation package that adds value. Over the last five years health insurance premiums have increased along with deductibles. Currently the City does not contribute to health savings accounts because these types of plans are not offered.

Weske reported that staff will be reviewing Long Lake's benefits and pay equity against comparable cities in preparation for bringing results back to the City Council. Staff does not feel a contracted wage study needs to be completed at this time, as staff will be able to compile wage data for Council's review. Recently completed wage studies will also offer a data source staff can review in compiling compensation comparisons. Staff is in receipt of a 2016 wage and benefit compensation

study completed by Springsted Inc. for the City of Corcoran which compiled data from a number of smaller-scale cities located in the areas of western Hennepin County, Wright County and Carver County.

Weske sought direction from Council on which cities to research that would offer reasonable comparisons of Long Lake's employee compensation and benefits.

Mayor and Council members suggested areas including Maple Plain, Spring Park, smaller communities closer to the Lake Minnetonka area, St. Bonifacius, western Hennepin County and eastern Wright County. Mayor Miner questioned whether the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) may have resources available online. Weske confirmed that the LMC does annually contract with a third party to compile wage and compensation data by sending out a survey to cities, and those cities who participate are able to access the survey results.

Council member Skjaret suggested that as three Council members currently have terms expiring, it may be a good year to consider a salary increase for Council members as expiring members would be able to carry a vote for an increase for the next Council. Mayor Miner suggested that wage rates for Planning Commission members be reviewed as well. Weske believed the LMC survey data would likely include salary information for Council and Commission members.

Council member Kvale voiced support for utilizing LMC data and resources, in combination with comparison data already obtained by staff, to compile further information for Council to review.

Council member Skjaret reflected that it is a challenge for a small community like Long Lake to stay competitive in hiring and being able to retain employees. Weske added that salary and benefits are important in combination.

Indicating that he believed he had adequate direction from Council, Weske affirmed he would pull available data from the LMC and recent studies to prepare additional information for future Council review. He also stated that the LMC does have a model handbook available for cities to work from and utilize. Council and staff discussed areas of the City's outdated handbook that warrant updating, including addressing parental leave, benefits, vacation/sick time accrual, sexual harassment policy, etc.

Council member Skjaret questioned whether the handbook applied to the City's Fire Department.

Fire Chief Van Eyll replied that the LLFD operates under an online policy manual through Lexipol. Though the LLFD is referenced in the handbook, a lot of the content does not apply to the Fire Department as firefighters aren't eligible for full-time City employee benefits.

Mayor Miner encouraged Weske to keep Council posted, and to reach out to Council if they can assist.

### **Update on Fire Service Contract and Related Discussions**

Mayor Miner recalled that at the last Council meeting, he had spoken about how he, Council member Dyvik and Administrator Weske had attended a Long Lake Fire meeting on January 13 to bring firefighters up to speed on what has been occurring from Long Lake's perspective over the past few years regarding the fire service contract, and to hear firefighters' feedback. Previously, following Council review, Mayor Miner had sent a letter to Orono asking if they'd be willing to engage in mediation through the state mediation bureau as the current fire service contract expires December 25. After Long Lake had met with firefighters on January 13, Orono was given the same opportunity to present to firefighters and let them know their perspective. Orono did so at a meeting on

January 27, with Mayor Denny Walsh, Council member Richard Crosby, and Administrator Dustin Rief speaking for Orono. Their presentation began with giving out a budget sheet, which Mayor Miner had provided to fellow Council members as a bench handout, listing recent budgets and breakdowns from Orono's perspective on what they've been paying for costs back to 2016. Mayor Miner asked Administrator Weske to review the budget information they provided to ensure both cities agree on the numbers.

Weske indicated some of the numbers included in Orono's information had been provided and verified by him. He will be meeting with Administrator Rief Thursday to discuss the budget information further.

Mayor Miner stated that also, as a bench handout, he had provided Council members with copies of meeting minutes of both cities' presentations to the Fire Department, as recorded by the Deputy Fire Chief. The overall theme continuing to be received from Orono is that they have a desire to take over Long Lake's Fire Department and have their own Orono Fire Department. Orono representatives referred to the amount of money they're spending on an annual basis, approximately 80% of expenses based on fire contract formulas, and their position is that since they pay most of the budget they feel they should have management control. Orono representatives did not fully answer some of the questions asked by firefighters. In speaking with Orono officials after their meeting with firefighters, Mayor Miner was told Orono is working with their attorney on a response to his letter.

Council member Dyvik pointed out that in the minutes from the Fire Department meeting with Orono, on the second page, minutes state that Orono representatives indicated "as a Council it was voted to allow for the contract to end". That statement makes it sound as if Orono has already taken action, and Council member Dyvik noted he would assume they would have taken action formally. Council member Dyvik was not aware they had done so.

Fire Chief Van Eyll added that he does not believe any formal action has been taken by Orono at a public meeting.

Mayor Miner indicated Mayor Walsh has communicated that his goal is to have the issue figured out in 2022, but that was met with resistance by firefighters who are concerned about recruiting in an uncertain atmosphere. The firefighters want the cities to keep working to resolve issues or address next steps. The issue of pensions is certainly a part of the conversation, as the pension is controlled by the City of Long Lake and Long Lake Firefighters Relief Association, which is clearly stated in the contract as well. Orono officials made it sound as if it's a simple proposition to take over the pension program at the same rate. Some firefighters have begun researching the matter, and have reached out to a representative of the Secretary of State's office who is an expert in the field and will be available to offer guidance to the cities.

Mayor Miner commented that that takeaway he and firefighters had after the meeting is that Orono will not back down on their position, they want control and ownership of Long Lake's Fire Department. Long Lake's decision is whether Orono needs to start their own department, or whether the City wants to consider relinquishing control of the Department. Mayor Miner encouraged involving the community on the topic as the Fire Department has been in existence for 105 years or so.

Related to that, Long Lake officials have begun having conversations with the City of Medina. Medina is served by four departments including Long Lake Fire, Loretto Fire, Hamel Fire, and Maple Plain Fire. The Loretto and Hamel departments are privately operated, which is a rarity these days and can come with challenges for funding and ongoing capital improvements. The City of Medina is

heavily involved in what the future of fire service in their City may be as well. Medina has been in discussions with Hamel Fire, and Long Lake has met with them as well. Medina recently received a grant to fund contracting with a consultant to conduct a study of their fire services, and Long Lake will come up as part of that research. Conversations with Medina have been positive, they have been a good partner, they very much appreciate the services they've been receiving from Long Lake Fire and the leadership Fire Chief Van Eyll provides. Long Lake officials have been meeting almost monthly with Medina, and Mayor Miner indicated he would keep Council up to speed on discussions with them.

Mayor Miner concluded by stating his comments were intended to offer Council an update on what's been occurring over the past few weeks. His goal would be to figure out the situation sooner rather than later, as it is really affecting Long Lake's firefighters. The matter has been a conversation at fire calls as well, and firefighters want their officials to come to a resolution so it does not interfere with them doing their jobs.

Council member Kvale inquired as to whether the grant program was still open and could offer opportunity for Long Lake to conduct its own study, should Long Lake opt not to follow Orono's options as stated.

Fire Chief Van Eyll replied that the MnDPS grant program is closed, but Long Lake Fire had participated in the program in the past for a shared services study with Mound and Maple Plain Fire. Long Lake would have to try and apply for the next round of grant funding, but Long Lake may have more information available at that time as well which could help narrow down the scope of what the City would be looking for in a study from an RFP perspective.

Mayor Miner noted that Long Lake has asked Medina to consider including Long Lake as much as possible in their process, perhaps to a degree involving a more formal partnership in future.

Fire Chief Van Eyll stated that Medina is hoping to have their study complete in about six to eight months. As they're serviced by four departments, Medina is at a crossroads of addressing whether they want to be served by departments, establish their own, and to review what is a good decision for Medina at this point in time.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Holbrook Park Update** – Council member Jerde shared that she has been helping out working at the Holbrook Park warming house, and it has been nice to see residents use the skating rink. She hears compliments that it is really good the warming house has been open.

**Long Lake Rowing Crew Boathouse Proposal/Meeting** – Council member Dyvik provided a review of the Long Lake Rowing Crew (LLRC) and their proposed boathouse project for Summit Park. As Orono's Park Commission had directed the LLRC to meet with neighbors regarding their proposal, the LLRC held a meeting with Summit Park neighbors, and then met with another group the previous Tuesday. Council member Dyvik had met with LLRC President Rob Berrell to discuss concerns he has heard voiced about the proposal – one being concern about an 8,000 square foot structure changing the view of the park and surrounding area; another being concern that the park and parking lot will be overrun with rowing users taking away from other uses; and there is concern about safety on the lake as if the LLRC moves to Orono, the limits on their hours governed by their CUP for operating in Long Lake no longer apply and Orono may or may not decide to restrict their use of the lake. Council member Dyvik encouraged individuals who share those or other concerns to write letters to Orono officials, and welcomed them to reach out to Long Lake as well. Though a recent article about the LLRC's proposal stated there are strong positions on both sides of the

potential project, all he has heard has been concern. Orono's Mayor has voiced strong support for the proposal, but those who live on the lake and use the park have different perspectives and are concerned. Council member Dyvik added that his concern is there will be an accident on the lake, as he's on the lake at low light hours often, and the rowers are hard to see. He indicated the LLRC will be meeting with the Orono Park Commission again and a recommendation may follow. Orono representatives seem to see the LLRC's proposal as a good fit and match to what will be going on in the area, as they plan to construct the East Long Lake Road trail and complete a shoreline stabilization project in the summer. Council member Dyvik's noted that while he has been a supporter of the rowing club, their use needs to scaled sensibly, and in his opinion the scope of their proposal is an overreach. Council member Skjaret pointed out that it was interesting to see Orono may strongly support the LLRC's expansion. Long Lake has taken steps and actively supported cleaning up Long Lake, the City of Orono has not contributed a dime to those efforts, but they want to add more activity to adding to stirring up the shallow end of the lake. He asked whether any environmental impact assessment may be done. Council member Dyvik replied that the message the LLRC gives is that they don't want to grow the club and are focused on sustaining membership and activities. An 8,000 square foot boathouse would suggest differently, offering opportunity to make room for growth. During his meeting with Mr. Berrell, Council member Dyvik had suggested he may be more supportive if their proposal came with a way to cap the number of members and limit hours of operation to ceasing before sunset. If there may be a way to limit and restrict rowing uses outside of low light conditions and capping membership, he personally might be more supportive from an operations standpoint.

**RFP for Former BP Station Site** – Council member Dyvik questioned when the RFP responses are due for parties interested in developing the former BP station site. Weske advised that proposals are due by a date in February, and he has had conversations with three or four interested parties thus far.

**Virginia Avenue Concepts, Additional Developer Questions** – Council member Dyvik indicated he and Weske will be generating questions for two developers who presented their concepts for redevelopment of Virginia Avenue to seek additional information, with the developers invited to present again at the EDA's next meeting.

**Carp Harvest** – Council member Skjaret asked whether there had been any further word of a carp biomass netting scheduled to take place soon. Council member Dyvik responded that the last he had heard, an inspection of carp locations would be undertaken to verify their behavior pattern in preparation for a possible removal. If conditions are right with both the ice and carp, he believes the Long Lake Waters Association is still planning to contract for a carp harvest.

**Trail Usage** – Council member Skjaret mentioned that Saturday evening, he had been out on his deck and had seen a dozen different groups out using Wurzer Trail. He noted he has seen Public Works out clearing the path of snow, and commented that it was nice to see so many using it in the winter.

**Election Future** – Council member Dyvik anecdotally mentioned Iowa and wondered whether the future of elections could allow for voting electronically in Minnesota. City Clerk Moeller noted that the growth in early voting trends would suggest that there is a demand for voters to be able to vote at their own convenience.

**Xcel Energy Tree Trimming** – Public Works Director Diercks informed Council that Xcel Energy has hired Asplundh to do tree trimming around power lines.

**Hanging Flower Baskets** – Diercks indicated that staff had delivered hardware in preparation for the planging vendor to begin working on the hanging flower baskets for the season.

**Newsletter on Listserv** – Mayor Miner thanked Moeller for distributing the CityScene newsletter via the Listserv.

**ADJOURN**

*Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 7:41 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Moeller  
City Clerk